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Many things changed when Nelson Mandela was democratically elected President of South Africa. For one thing, the country needed a new flag. For another, the people needed a new national anthem. That was an especially touchy issue.

Before Mandela's presidency, South Africa's national anthem was an Afrikaner song. Entitled "Die Stem," the words (in part) celebrate the nineteenth-century white "trekkers" who'd pushed north, crushing black resistance.

During the years of apartheid, black South Africans used a different song - "Nkosi Sikelele" - as their anthem. Its Xhosa-language words express the longing of an oppressed people who want to be free.

When Mandela took over, the "Rainbow Nation" included whites who did not understand Xhosa and blacks who despised "Die Stem." Yet ... many of the words in both songs express important concepts for both sides.

After a great deal of discussion, decision-makers announced South Africa's new national anthem would combine both "Nkosi Sikelele" and "Die Stem." Mandela, it turns out, had insisted on it.

In 1995, when the flag and the anthem were both new, the Springboks were winning matches during the South-African-hosted Rugby World Cup. Cheered on by their fans - and their President - the underdog team played with confidence. Was it possible they could actually finish at the top?

The slogan that year - created to unite the whole country behind the Springboks - was "One Team, One Country." Edward Griffiths (South Africa's CEO of the rugby federation) came up with the phrase. Morné du Plessis (manager of South Africa's World Cup team) conceived a plan to carry it out.

Black South Africans played soccer, not rugby, so they did not understand the sport. Nor did they care about it, since the game was a symbol of apartheid. How could anyone think that "One Team, One Country" could work under such circumstances?

A highly respected former Springbok captain, with liberal political leanings, du Plessis thought there was a way to make rugby acceptable to people who once despised it. He decided his team would work with black South Africans to help them learn (and love) the game.

There was something more du Plessis did - something really important. How could there be "One Team, One Country" when the Springboks only knew one half of the new national anthem? If blacks saw the team's lips move during "Die Stem," and not move during "Nkosi Sikelele," what kind of message would that send?

Morné hired a tutor to make sure his players were able to sing both songs.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ONE-TEAM-ONE-COUNTRY-Invictus)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

Media Stream



South Africa - National Flag

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/South-Africa-National-Flag>



ONE TEAM, ONE COUNTRY

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/ONE-TEAM-ONE-COUNTRY>



One Team, One Country

Clip, with historical footage, analyzing rugby as a symbol of the apartheid era.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/One-Team-One-Country>



Morne du Plessis

Clip from *The South African's* interviews at the "Invictus" Premiere. Video online, courtesy *The South African TV Channel* at YouTube.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Morne-du-Plessis>



Springboks Sing Nkosi Sikeleli

Clip of the Springboks, singing South Africa's national anthem - including the first part "Nkosi Sikeleli - at the start of a rugby match.

Quoted lyrics online, courtesy the government of South Africa's web site.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Springboks-Sing-Nkosi-Sikeleli>